

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

18th MARCH 2019

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2022

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the draft Homelessness Strategy attached as **Appendix 1**.

2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:

1. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

3.1 Part 2 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Authority to carry out a Homelessness Review for its area and then formulate and adopt a Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of that review. Any review and strategy must look at the achievement of the following objectives:

- The prevention of homelessness;
- That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless;
- That satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.

3.2 Homelessness is defined in the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2015 as when a person “has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel or adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy that accommodation”.

3.3 Reasons for homelessness include; lack of security of tenure with parents, relatives or friends; breakdown of relationship with partner (sometimes as a result of domestic abuse); violence or harassment; mortgage or rent arrears; loss of rented or tied accommodation; current property unaffordable or unsuitable; being discharged from prison, care, hospital or the armed forces and; those granted refugee status.

3.4 An Independent Consultant was commissioned to undertake the homelessness review on behalf of the Authority. This offered an impartial and fresh perspective for the Strategy. This review was undertaken between July-October 2018 and the approach taken has been one of co-production of the Strategy and all key stakeholder groups were surveyed or interviewed, including people that use, or have used, homelessness services. This included:

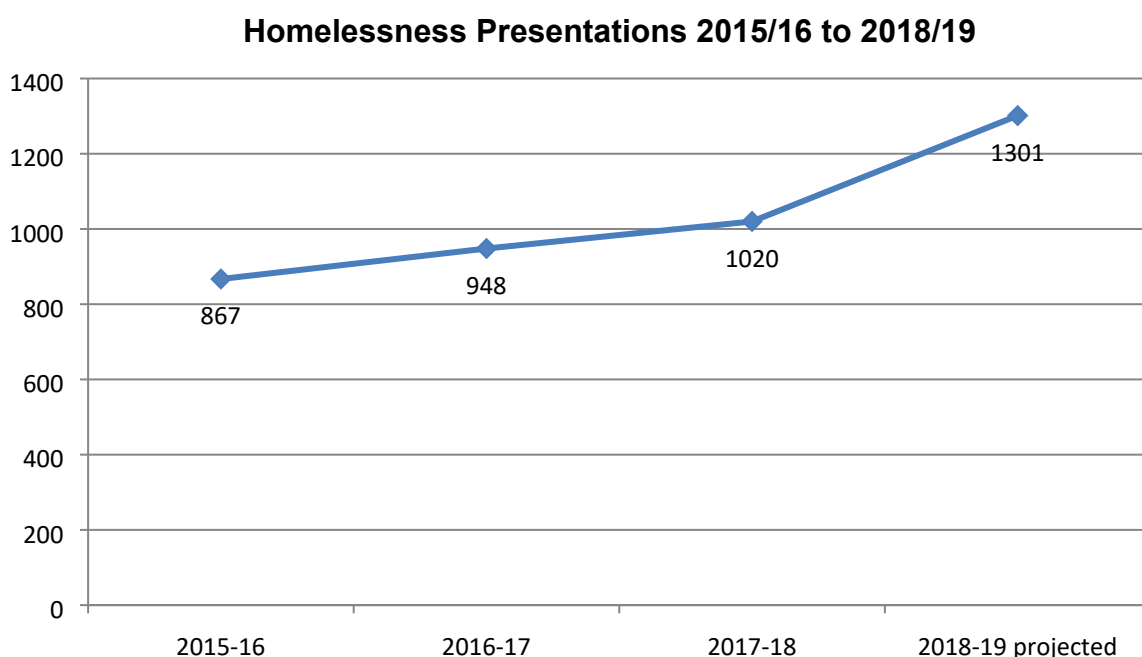
- 118 questionnaires / face to face interviews with service users
- 30 internal / external partner interviews
- 35 internal / external partners attendance at a stakeholder event

Key performance statistics were also analysed along with a review of relevant local and national policies.

3.5 The Homelessness Review has provided the necessary information to draft the Homelessness Strategy for the period 2018-2022 as per Welsh Government guidance. The key messages from the review are:

3.5.1 Homelessness presentations have been increasing year on year, as can be seen in Chart 1, with an 18% increase between 2015/16 and 2017/18;

Chart 1



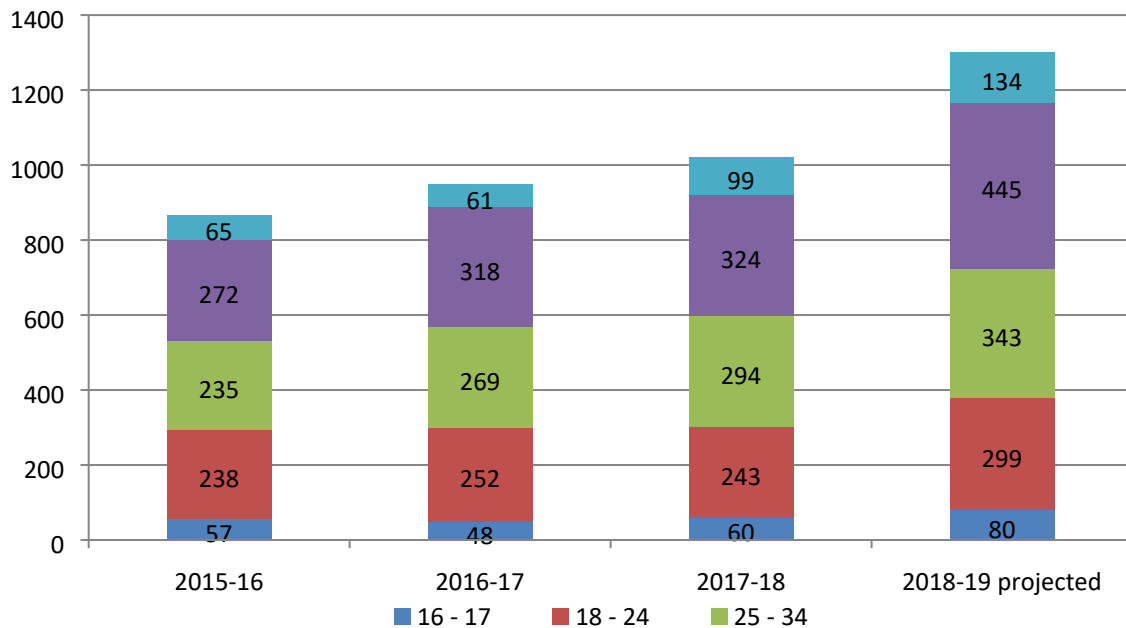
3.5.2 In 2017/18, there were 1020 presentations and this is projected to increase to 1301 in 2018/19 (a 28% increase);

3.5.3 Of those 1020 presentations, 68% were from single people and 59% were aged 34 and under. This is noteworthy as these people are subject to limited Local Housing Allowance entitlement;

3.5.4 Chart 2 shows the number of homelessness presentations by age group since 2015/16. Presentations from people aged 55 or over and aged 16-17 have seen a noteworthy increase;

Chart 2

Homelessness Presentations 2015/16 to 2018/19 by Age Group



3.5.5 The greatest reason for homelessness was “loss of rented or tied accommodation” (19%) followed by “parent no longer able or willing to accommodate” (13%);

3.5.6 Private rented housing (38%) and social rented housing (39%) were the most used methods for preventing homelessness.

3.5.7 Private rented housing (38%) and social rented housing (27%) were also the most used methods for relieving homelessness for households who were actually homeless. However, supported accommodation is also increasingly being used (24%).

3.5.8 During 2017/18, there were 307 households helped by being placed into temporary accommodation. This was a 6% increase on 2016/17 and an 8% increase on 2015/16. Local Authority owned hostel accommodation was the most commonly used form of temporary accommodation, where 67% of households were placed.

3.5.9 Homelessness significantly affects health and wellbeing. As well as addressing housing needs, homeless services can prevent deterioration of physical and mental wellbeing;

3.5.10 The cost of not addressing homelessness has a negative financial impact across the wider public sector. This includes social services, health, the criminal justice system, and education; and

3.5.11 Prevention and relief of homelessness should be explicit within all statutory corporate plans, including Health and Probation.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 A draft Strategy (at **Appendix 1**) has been developed to respond to the findings of the review and has been submitted to Welsh Government. This has been submitted on the basis that it is subject to public consultation and final approval by Cabinet.
- 4.2 The review identified a number of areas to be developed but one of the key messages was to reinforce that homelessness is a complex, cross cutting issue which not only requires a corporate approach but also a partnership approach to tackle. To further develop corporate and partnership responses to the Strategy findings, an Action Plan is being developed and will be reported to Cabinet alongside the final Strategy.
- 4.3 Discussions have been held with many of the key stakeholders around formulating the priorities and actions that have been identified and included in the draft Strategy. This has included relevant internal and external stakeholders and the Council's key partners.
- 4.4 On 22nd January 2019 Cabinet approved public consultation on the draft Strategy over a period of six weeks to ensure that members of the public who have concerns or are affected by the issues around housing and homelessness are able to formally put forward their views as well as any stakeholders or organisations who have an interest in the issues and proposed actions. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires the Authority to consult with relevant stakeholders as it considers appropriate in relation to a proposed Strategy. Responses will then be taken into account and necessary amendments made, with a final Strategy being presented to Cabinet for approval in April 2019.
- 4.5 As part of the consultation process it is recommended that the Committee consider the draft Strategy and provide comments.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An initial screening Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out during the development of the draft Strategy which identified that no further EIA is required at this time.
- 6.2 The implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 means that the Authority has additional duties to prevent homelessness and to help to secure accommodation for

eligible applicants. This has increased the help given to single people and those without dependent children.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsive Wales

7.2 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The recommendations in this report will not incur any additional financial implications and will be managed within existing resources, Currently, some projects are funded via the Welsh Government Supporting People Programme Grant (to become the Housing Support Grant from April 2019) and this and other funding opportunities will be explored going forward. However, some elements of the Action Plan and draft Strategy may have financial implications and will be subject to further Cabinet reports as appropriate.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and provide comments on the draft Homelessness Strategy.

Mark Shephard
Interim Chief Executive
March 2019

Contact officer: Lynne Berry
Group Manager Housing

Telephone: (01656) 643517

Email: Lynne.Berry@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Ravenscourt

Background documents: None